

# APPROACHES TO QA OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS OUTCOMES OF THE IMINQA PROJECT

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# STARTING POINT

- Micro-credentials are not new – but have gained prominence and new terminology
- Previous work on QA of micro-credentials in HE has confirmed:
  - Applicability of Bologna Process QA tools to micro-credentials
  - Providers have primary responsibility for quality and QA of micro-credentials
  - External QA should be proportionate
- IMINQA project has further explored the state of play and developed ‘reflective questions’ for internal and external QA of micro-credentials

## STATE OF PLAY

- Wide variety of approaches and stages of implementation
- Preferable to use and adapt existing approaches as far as possible
- Further work needed on RPL, stackability, portability etc.
- QA agencies expect guidance from national/European level

# WHAT DEFINES QUALITY OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS?

Quality is contextual



Defined in relation to fitness for purpose



What is the purpose of micro-credentials?

## WHY DO HEIS OFFER MICRO-CREDENTIALS?

- To increase their visibility and reputation by widening geographical reach and attracting more diverse groups of students,
- To increase their responsiveness to students' and labour markets' demands by reskilling and upskilling in a shorter time than traditional degree programmes
- To experiment with new pedagogies and technologies and to generate additional income or reduce costs

(Jansen and Schuwer, 2015)

What has changed since 2015?

# WHY DO LEARNERS TAKE MICRO-CREDENTIALS?

- Enrolled students
  - As elective modules required by their programme
  - Self interest / personal development
  - Professional development
- Lifelong learners
  - Professional development / upskilling / reskilling
  - Access to higher education
  - Self interest / personal development

# APPROACHES TO (QA OF) MICRO-CREDENTIALS

- Unbundling existing programmes
  - Developed through the institution's usual curriculum design processes
  - Requires additional reflection on how the micro-credential sits when outside the usual context
  - Usually covered by institution's internal QA processes for programmes
- Micro-credentials developed independently
  - Usually part of institution's life-long learning provision
  - Could also be tailor-made and/or developed in partnership
  - Often covered by institution's QA processes for life-long learning (lighter touch)

## REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR INTERNAL QA

- What are the reasons for offering micro-credentials?
- How can the special characteristics of micro-credentials be captured in the internal QA approach?
- What are the specific considerations for micro-credentials that are
  - originally conceived as part of an existing programme?
  - developed independently from any existing programme?
- What are the specific considerations for micro-credentials developed and/or offered in partnership with other organisations and providers?



# REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR EXTERNAL QA

- What is the role of quality assurance agencies in supporting the QA of micro-credentials?
  - Expert body
  - Facilitating dialogue
  - Offering support and guidance
  - Ensuring quality through external QA frameworks
  - Providing information
- To what extent might existing external QA procedures need to be adjusted to address institutional approaches to QA of micro-credentials?
- How can QA agencies support alternative providers that offer micro-credentials?

## SUCCESS FACTORS

- Balance between regulation, flexibility and proportionality
- Communication and transparency of information
- Stakeholder engagement
- Supporting student success

## RESOURCES

- [IMINQA Report on approaches to quality assurance of micro-credentials](#)
- [IMINQA Reflective questions for internal and external QA of micro-credentials](#)
- [ENQA working group report on quality assurance of micro-credentials](#)

THANK  
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